
Faculty Books

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Slipping Out of Bloom

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Slipping Out of Bloom

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Becoming

Spring-thick with snowy
blossoms, the ornamental

pear tree slowly slips
out of bloom, sloughing off

petal by skin-soft petal, bleeding
green as leaf after spear-

like leaf thrusts through,
laying down one life

for another. How
willingly it becomes

and becomes.

Magnetic Hill,
Moncton, New Brunswick

Water running uphill—
that, you don't forget—
andma it's quite the sensation

to shift into neutral, feel your car
picking up speed as you
sail upwards with the stream,

or so it seems—the brain
just can't comprehend it.
I was too young then

to understand, but now I find
an old postcard my mother
had saved in her scrapbook

and see the contours of the land
induce the illusion, the magnet
is the same there as elsewhere,

the ride works best when you
silence your engine,
let go the brake.

Liquid

A Chinstrap penguin on a Christmas postcard
arrives from the southern edge of the world
where ocean sky and ice
merge into one vivid blue.
Turquoise gems the old icebergs are
and he spends many a day on them
scaling their slippery peaks
with his black-and-white prowess.
Caught going solo
he ascends the steepest tip
perpendicular to the wishes of the sea
and I wonder whether lazuline
fills even his lungs as he stretches toward
the sky he cannot fly into
but just may touch in his midnight dreams
liquid as his life.

Real

Fog, having settled in
among trees
this cold February morning,

embossed every naked
brittle limb,
the boughs and tendrils

elegant as pearl,
diamonds
in the rough of all this winter.

Oh, how I wanted to paint
the scene—
to sit behind my father's easel

in the middle of fields
steeped
in snow old and new,

mingling oils and brushes
on canvas,
spreading cerulean

to mimic the now cloudless sky,
slathering
white upon the landscape—

dressng earth in her gown
incandescent
and seamless in daybreak—

shaping sepia into oaks and maples,
glazing
those dozens of branches,

dabbing on the last stratum of mist
suspended in midair
like a film of spun gossamer—

beauty so intense, it didn't look real.

Apparition

Only in mist do they emerge,
does sweeping over soy
young in rain-soft fields,
leaping from loam
to shadow-dark loam
over barbed wire fences
with the same ease
of any ghost-white mare,
drawing closer to their fawns
in the protective folds of fog.
They are five or six
congregating by the stream,
hard to know for sure this mystical
morning as their forms
like phantoms
blur between earth
and air.

Speech

Hawk-hinged, his wings
 spread half-open
like a suit jacket,
 he looks around
the unplanted field his talons
 sink into,
and he's not alone—
 it's a convention
of scavengers, crows are
 here—and how restless
they are while they gather
 to hear him
speak. Like paper programs
 snapping in a tight
room, their wings fan,
 and they fidget
like they just can't get
 comfortable,
like they're wondering
 what on earth
he's got to say anyway,
 and he just stands there
motionless, superior,
 waiting for these annoying
little beasts to settle down
 and listen.

Ace

Poker-faced squirrel
shuffles red leaves like cards,
shoves one in its mouth,
climbs a tree, puts its ace
in the hole.

Reflection

Twitching its orange-tagged ear
as two flies landed, its jawing rhythm
sounding like footsteps crunching mulch,

number 43, short and stout,
came closer to the wire fence
than any of the others

to investigate this black Lab pup,
rump high, tail wagging ferociously
on the other side. And the fence became

a magic mirror. Oh, yes, both wore
the plush black coats of their youth,
had those round mocha eyes, seeped

steam through their cool glistening noses.
But that's not really what I meant.
For while the calf swallowed

and Maggie approached the fence,
suddenly sober and aware,
they seemed to wipe the mirror

clean with wonder,
and I could almost hear them asking
the same curious question,

the echo between them
like the call of owls from tree
to moon-waxed tree,

who are you?

On the Ground in Ohio

Her heart leaps	into the field
where the geese	are—
a hundred,	maybe two,
gathering	by the stream,
most sauntering	along the ground,
crooning,	tantalizing her lyrical
Labrador limbs.	And oh, she wants
to go—	to sprint,
split their assembly	in two,
and try, just try,	to soar with them
as they burst	into form.